

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
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P R 220607Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7020

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 AMMAN 0932

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, JO, EG, XF

SUBJECT: TALK WITH PRIME MINISTER -- EGYPTIAN RELATIONS

REF: AMMAN 0845

SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER RIFAI BELIEVES EGYPTIANS ARE OVERLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT WHAT US IS ABLE TO GET ISRAEL TO DO FOR PEACE, THIS INCREASING SADAT'S FRUSTRATION AND ANGER AT ARABS FOR HOLDING THINGS BACK. IN RIFAI'S VIEW, SADAT BELIEVES US DETERMINED TO MAINTAIN PEACE MOMENTUM ON 1976 AND HAS OBTAINED ISRAEL'S AGREEMENT TO COOPERATE. SPECIFICALLY, WHILE GENEVA AND PREPARATORY CONFERENCE ARE DEAD ENDS BECAUSE OF DIFFERENCES OVER PLO INITIAL ATTENDANCE AND GOLAN A NONSTARTER BECAUSE OF ISRAELI INTRANSIGENCE, SADAT THINKS (ACCORDING TO RIFAI) THAT ANOTHER SINAI STEP NOT EXCLUDED. RIFAI WONDERS IF US ALREADY HAS OBTAINED ISRAELI AGREEMENT TO BE GENEROUS ON SINAI III, AND HE SPECULATES THAT ONE REASON SADAT CURRENTLY IS SO FRUSTRATED IS THAT HE CANNOT FIND A WAY IN THE ARAB WORLD TO ACCEPT ISRAELI GENEROSITY. THAT EXPLAINS HIS FURIOUS ATTACKS ON JORDAN WHICH HAS REFUSED TO PROVIDE COVER FOR EGYPT'S NEXT SINAI STEP. EGYPTIAN ATTACKS, RIFAI MAKES CLEAR, ONLY MAKE IT HARDER FOR JORDAN TO MOVE AWAY FROM SYRIA AND TOWARD EGYPT. RIFAI CAUTIONED US AGAIN AGAINST BASING  
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OUR ARAB POLICY ON EGYPTIAN PRIMACY, AND WARNED AGAINST

GETTING CAUGHT IN QUAGMIRE OF EGYPTIAN ECONOMIC PROBLEMS  
WHICH SOURED EGYPT ON USSR AND WILL DO SAME FOR EGYPT-  
US RELATIONS. IF EGYPTIANS WANT A FIGHT AT ARAB  
LEAGUE COUNCIL MEETING 15 MARCH, JORDANIANS ARE READY  
TO TRY TO "EXPOSE" SADAT ON JORDAN-WEST BANK MATTERS.  
END SUMMARY

1. WHEN I TALKED WITH RIFAI FEBRUARY 19, HE GAVE ME HIS  
ASSESSMENT OF PRESENT EGYPTIAN VIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS IN  
THE AREA. HE DID THIS AS A WAY OF EXPLAINING THE PRESENT  
COURSE OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THE AREA AND PARTICULARLY IN  
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EGYPT AND JORDAN. MOST READERS  
ALREADY UNDERSTAND RIFAI'S OWN BIAS AGAINST EGYPT AND  
TOWARD SYRIA AND WILL SEE IT EMERGE CLEAR AS ASSESSMENT  
UNFOLDS.

2. HE BEGAN BY SAYING THAT THE US WOULD NOT  
LIKE HIS ASSESSMENT. THE EGYPTIANS PROBABLY BELIEVED  
THE US WAS SERIOUS ABOUT NOT LETTING 1976 BECOME A  
YEAR OF STAGNATION. THEY MAY ALSO BELIEVE THAT THE US  
WAS CAPABLE OF AND DID GET RABIN TO AGREE WITH IT AT THE  
END OF JANUARY THAT SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONE THIS YEAR.  
WHILE THE US WAS PROBABLY ABLE TO GET THE ISRAELIS TO  
AGREE IN GENERAL ON DOING SOMETHING, RIFAI WAS NOT USRE  
THE ISRAELIS COULD HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TO AGREE TO SPECIFIC  
STEPS.

3. HE THEN REVIEWED, HE SAID FROM THE EGYPTIAN PERSPEC-  
TIVE, WHAT MIGHT BE DONE SPECIFICALLY. ON GENEVA, THE  
SYRIANS, AND INDEED THE OTHER ARABS ARE NOW SO FIXED ON  
THE POSITION THAT THE PLO SHOULD BE THERE FROM THE OUTSET  
THAT THERE IS NOTHING THAT CAN REALLY BE DONE. IT'S  
STILL A DEAD END. EVEN A PREPARATORY CONFERENCE WOULD  
NOT WORK.

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ACTION SS-25

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EXDIS

4. LOOKING FURTHER AFIELD AT SEPARATE STEPS, RIFAI SAID THE EGYPTIANS CONCLUDE THAT ON THE GOLAN THE ISRAELIS CANNOT BE PRESSURED BY THE US TO MOVE BACK THE REQUIRED NUMBER OF KILOMETERS TO MEET SYRIA'S NEEDS. SIMILARLY, THERE IS LITTLE THAT ISRAEL WILL DO ON THE WEST BANK, AND WE (JORDAN) WILL NOT NEGOTIATE OURSELVES, SO THAT ALTERNATIVE IS OUT. BUT THE EGYPTIANS DO NOT EXCLUDE ANOTHER STEP FOR THEMSELVES AND SADAT MAY INDEED BE VERY READY FOR A STEP IN THE SINAI. PERHAPS IT WOULD NOT BE TOO FARFETCHED TO THINK THAT THE US HAS ALREADY GOTTEN ISRAEL TO MAKE A VERY GENEROUS OFFER TO EGYPT. IN ANY EVENT, FOR SADAT, ANOTHER STEP FOR HIMSELF IS THE ONLY WAY TO GO. BUT HE IS DEEPLY FRUSTRATED BY ARAB OPPOSITION AND THE FACT THAT HE IS NO LONGER THE NUMBER ONE IN THE ARAB WORLD. SYRIA HAS MOVED INTO OPPOSITION AND COMMANDS FOR THE FIRST TIME A GOOD SHARE OF THE SUPPORT OF THE OTHER ARABS.

5. WHY SADAT IS FURIOUS IS THAT HE NEEDS SOME ARAB COMPANY IN HIS NEXT STEP AND JORDAN WILL NOT GIVE IT TO HIM. HE IS ANGRY "OVER JORDAN", NOT NECESSARILY "AT JORDAN." "THAT'S WHY HE KEEPS TALKING TO US ABOUT ADHERING TO THE ALEXANDRIA COMMUNIQUE, PUTTING ASIDE RABAT, NOT HOLDING ELECTIONS SO WE DO NOT ABANDON THE WEST BANK." NOW HE IS ATTACKING US IN EXACTLY THE OPPOSITE TERMS AND HE THINKS HE CAN FORCE US TO BREAK  
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OFF WITH SYRIA AND PRESSURE US TOWARD HIMSELF. BUT THE MORE HE ATTACKS US, THE LESS WE CAN CONSIDER GIVING IN TO HIM." RIFAI THEN ADDED THAT IN THE PAST WHEN NASSER HAD WORKED OVER JORDAN, HE COULD GET THE CROWDS OUT IN THE STREETS. NOW PEOPLE JUST IGNORE SADAT OR CONSIDER IT BEING A STRONG ARAB NATIONALIST BY TURNING ANTI-EGYPTIAN.

6. RIFAI WENT ON TO EVINCE SOME OF HIS OWN CONCERN ABOUT OUR EGYPT-FIRST POLICY. HE SAID THAT SOONER OR LATER THE US WILL HAVE TO COME TO RECOGNIZE THAT SADAT CANNOT DELIVER ASAD, ONLY ASAD CAN. IF WE KEEP TRYING TO USE SADAT TO LEAD THE ARABS AROUND WE WILL BE MAKING A SERIOUS MISTAKE. IT USED TO BE SAID THAT

TO MAKE WAR OR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST YOU HAD TO HAVE EGYPT. NOW HE WAS NOT SO SURE THAT EGYPT ALONE WAS REALLY THE ANSWER. HE WENT ON ALSO IN FAMILIAR TERMS TO TALK WITH ME ABOUT THE MORASS THE US WAS GETTING ITSELF INTO BY TRYING TO TAKE OVER THE FULL ECONOMIC BURDEN OF EGYPT. THE SOVIETS HAD FAILED AND THE US COULD NOT DO IT ALL ALONE. WHEN SADAT FINALLY UNDERSTANDS THIS HE WILL MOVE AWAY FROM THE US AND TRY TO FIND A NEW CENTER OF GRAVITY IN THE AREA.

7. WHILE WE WERE TALKING RIFAI ALSO MADE THE POINT THAT RIGHT NOW JORDAN FELT IT BEST NOT TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST THE EGYPTIANS IF IT COULD AVOID IT. HOWEVER, THE EGYPTIANS WERE CALLING FOR AN ARAB LEAGUE COUNCIL MEETING MARCH 15. IF THEY WANTED IT, JORDAN WOULD GO AND TRY TO TURN THE AFFAIR INTO A REAL DONEYBROOK. THEY WOULD TELL ALL THE OTHER ARABS ABOUT THEIR CONTACTS WITH THE PLO ON THE ELECTION ISSUE AND ABOUT SADAT'S URGING THEM NOT TO HOLD ELECTIONS. HE WAS SORRY HE WOULD BE TRAVELLING WITH THE KING THEN AND COULD NOT GO HIMSELF, BUT HE WOULD SEND A STRONG DELEGATION.

8. THE ABOVE ASSESSMENT BEGAN AS RIFAI'S VIEWS OF WHY EGYPTIANS WERE DOING WHAT THEY ARE DOING VIS A VIS JORDAN AND HAS ENDED AS MORE RIFAI'S VIEWS THAN THE EGYPTIAN ASSESSMENT HE SET OUT TO GIVE ME. I PASS IT ON AS SYMPTOMATIC OF THE THINKING NOW CURRENT IN JORDAN'S

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